vol 15

COMPLIMENTARY

The Advent

7

What you are not able to do today, you will achieve tomorrow. Persevere and you shall conquer.

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The ADVENT

February, 1961

CONTENTS

		Page
EDITORIALS	—*Nolini Kanta Gupta*	5
THE TEACHINGS OF THE MOTHER (IX)	—*Rishabhchand*	13
SHIVA	—*M.V. Seetaraman*	23
SRI AUROBINDO AND THE NEW AGE	—*Rishabhchand*	34
THE LIFE DIVINE (An Outline)	—*N. Pearson*	41
REVIEWS :		58

We climb ill if we forget our base.

SRI AUROBINDO

Vol. XVII No. 1 February, 1961

THE ADVENT

The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda. - - - - *Sri Aurobindo.*

EDITORIALS*

MOTHER'S COMMENTARY

ON THE

DHAMMAPADA

Others do not know that we must cease to exist here, for those who know it the passions cease.

WHEN you think you may die the next moment, immediately there occurs in you a detachment from material things; it is logical that you think thereupon only of that which does not depend upon this physical life and which is the only thing that will still belong to you once you have left this body, that is to

* Based on the Mother's Talks

say, the eternal existence. The Buddha does not use the word "Divine", but it is essentially the same.

To think that one may die the next moment was formerly in the ancient initiations, a discipline that one had to follow during a certain period, for the reason I have just mentioned and also in order to overcome all fear of death and be habituated to it. In that age and at the time when Dhammapada was spoken by the Buddha, the possibility of an earthly immortality was never mentioned, because this possibility belonged to such a far-off future that there would be no point in speaking of it.

Today Sri Aurobindo tells us that this possibility is near at hand and that we have only to prepare for it. But the essential condition even for making the preparation possible is to efface completely all fear of death.

You must neither fear it nor desire it.

Stand above it, in an absolute tranquillity, neither fear it nor desire it.

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One who goes about in the pursuit of the pleasurable, who is uncontrolled in his senses, who is immoderate in his food, who is lazy and unmanly, such a man Mara overwhelms even as the gale does a weak tree.

In the Buddhist literature, Mara represents the Evil Spirit, all that is contrary or opposed to the spiritual life; in certain cases it represents death—not so much physical death as death to truth, to the spiritual being.

Here, it means that so long as one does not control his senses and desires, but remains occupied with external material satisfactions as the most important thing, one has not the necessary will to resist the attack of hostile forces and all that pulls us down and away from the spiritual reality.

The Dhammapada does not take its stand so much on the moral point of view, it is not evil as men understand it with their blind justice and the arbitrary sense of good and bad. Evil, from the spiritual point of view, is truly that which takes us away from the goal, that sometimes even snatches us from our deepest reason of existence, from the truth of our being and prevents us from realising it.

It is in this way it is to be understood.

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One who goes about in the pursuit of that which is not the pleasurable, who is well controlled in his senses, who is moderate in regard to food, who is full of faith and manliness, such a man the Mara does not overwhelm even as the gale does not a rocky mountain.

What Dhammapada means when it speaks of faith is not mere belief in a dogma or a religion, it is not even faith in the teaching of the Master, it is faith in one's own possibility, the certitude that whatever be the difficulties, whatever the obstacles, whatever the imperfections, even the negations in the being, one is born for the realisation and one shall realise.

The will must never falter, the effort must be persevering and the faith unshakable. Then instead of putting in years to realise what one has to realise, one can do it in a few years, at times even in a few days and, if there is sufficient intensity, in a few hours. That is to say, you can take a position within yourself and no bad will that attacks the realisation will have power over you even as the storm has none over a rock.

Afterwards, the way is no more difficult, it becomes extraordinarily interesting.

*
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He who puts on the holy robe and yet has not discarded his impurities and has neither self-control nor truth, does not indeed deserve the holy robe.

Of course, the yellow robe, in its literal sense, is the robe of the Buddhist monks—it became the robe of all who practised asceticism. But it is not that that the Dhammapada truly means to say, because there is no dearth of men who put on the yellow robe but are not purified of their taints. The yellow robe is taken as the symbol of consecration to the spiritual life, the external sign of renunciation of all that is not an exclusive concentration upon the spiritual life.

What Buddhism means by "impurities" is chiefly egoism and ignorance; because, from the Buddhist standpoint, the greatest of all taints is ignorance, not ignorance of external things, of the laws of Nature and of all that you learn at school, but the ignorance of the deepest truth of things, of the law of the being, of the Dharma.

It is to be noticed that the two defects insisted upon here are want of self-control and want of truthfulness (loyalty). Truthfulness means here sincerity, honesty; what Dhammapada blames most severely is hypocrisy : to pretend that you want to live the spiritual life and not do it, to pretend that you want to seek the truth and not do it, to show off the external signs of consecration to the divine life—here symbolised by the yellow robe—but inside to be busy with oneself, one's selfishness and one's own needs.

It is interesting to note Dhammapada's insistence on self-control, for according to the Buddhist teaching, excess is bad in everything. Buddha stresses always on the Middle Path. You must not be too much on one side nor too much on the other, to exaggerate one thing or the other. You must have measure, balance in all things, the balance of moderation.

Therefore the qualities that make you worthy of following the spiritual life are to have an inner balance, balance in your action and to be moderate in everything, to be sincere, honest, truthful.

Balance, moderation, truthfulness, honesty : this is the subject of our meditation.

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One who has discarded all impurities, who is firmly established in the moral disciplines, who is full of self-control and truth deserves indeed the yellow robe.

I would not like you to take this text as a moral catechism. It possesses certainly a much deeper sense, because in all truly spiritual teachings, morality as it is mentally conceived is not the thing intended.

The same with regard to the word "impurity". Pure, as it is understood morally, is not the sense given in a truly spiritual teaching; and particularly from the Buddhist standpoint, purity is absence of ignorance, as I have already told you last time, and ignorance means ignoring the inner law, the truth of the being. And truthfulness means not to take the illusion for the reality, the changing and flitting appearances for the inner and real permanence of the being.

We can say then that self-control and self-mastery, measure, absence of desire, the search for the inner truth of the being and the law of its self-manifestation are the very necessary preoccupations for those who want to practise the spiritual life.

To be true to oneself, to one's goal, not to let oneself be moved by disorderly impulses, not to take the changing appearances for the Reality, these are the virtues that one must have in order to progress on the way of spirituality.

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They who consider error as truth and see truth in error never attain the truth, for they follow wrong desires and their false apprehensions[1].

A commentary may be added; for, if one were satisfied with taking error for truth and truth for error, it would be logically very easy to make one's choice as soon as one found for some reason or with help from somewhere what is truly the truth and what is truly the error; one takes up the truth and rejects the error. But unfortunately one loves his error, there is somewhere in the being an unwillingness to recognise what is true.

My experience is like this: whenever you want to know the truth sincerely, you do know it. There is *always* something that points out to you the error, helping you to recognise the truth. And if you observe with attention you find out that it is because you prefer error that you do not find the truth.

Even in small details, the very smallest (not to speak of the big things of life, the big decisions that one has to take), even in the smallest things, whenever the aspiration for the truth and the will to be true are wholly sincere, the indication comes always. And precisely with the method of the Buddhistic discipline if you follow up within yourself the causes of your way of being, you always find out that persistence in error comes from desire. Because you have the preference, the desire to feel in a certain way, you make a mistake. It is not simply because you do not know what is true. You do not know it precisely because you say, "Oh, I want the truth", but in a vague, general, imprecise way. In fact, if you take a detail, every little detail and put your finger upon it, you discover that you are playing the ostrich in order not to see. You put up something uncertain, vague, a veil in order not to see behind.

Whenever there is sincerity, you find that the help, the

[1] "for they have false apprehensions in vew".

guidance, the grace are always there to give you the answer and you do not make the mistake for long.

It is this sincerity in the aspiration for progress, in the will for truth, in the need to be truly pure—pure as it is understood in the spiritual life,—it is this sincerity which is the key to all progress. With it you know, you can.

There is always some part in the being, something which prefers to deceive itself, otherwise the light is there, always ready to guide, but you shut your eyes in order not to see.

*
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They who know the true as the true and the false as the false attain the true, for they follow true desires and right apprehensions.

We saw last time that it is not sufficient to be able to distinguish what is right from what is wrong. At the first sight this seems to be the most difficult point. Evidently if everyone were to find it by himself, it would be a long work; you may have to pass your whole life in going through experiences to enlighten you as to what is right and what is not.

Therefore it is easier to go to someone who has done the work before you and whom you have simply to ask, "Is this true? is that wrong ?" That offers evidently a great advantage, but it is not always sufficient; for if you have the desire that things should be in a certain way and that what you prefer should be right, then you are not always ready to listen to good advice.

The last sentence, "and they follow right desires" which seems to be a commonplace is perhaps the most difficult portion of the problem.

In this book, in this teaching small phrases are said that appear so simple. If you read without sufficient reflection, you tell yourself, "But it is self-evident, you recognise as true what is true and as false what is false, what does that mean then ?" But first

of all it is not so easy to distinguish what is true from what is not, then to recognise, that is to say, to admit that such a thing is true; and particularly more difficult it is perhaps to recognise that such a thing is false.

In reality, in order to discern exactly what is false requires such sincerity in the aspiration, such resolution in the will to be true that even this little phrase "to know the true as true and the false as the false" means a very considerable realisation. And the conclusion, "they attain the truth" is a great promise.

There are teachings which say that one must have no desire at all; it is those that aim at a complete withdrawal from life in order to enter into the immobility of the Spirit, the absence of all activity, all movement, all form, all external reality. To reach there one must have no desire at all, that is to say, one must come out of all will to progress; progress itself becomes something unreal and external. But if you keep in your conception of Yoga the idea of progress and if you admit that the whole universe follows a progression, then what you have to do is to shift the objective of desire; instead of turning towards things that are external, artificial, superficial and egoistical, you must join it as a force of realisation to the aspiration directed to the truth.

These few words, "they follow right desires", are a proof that the teaching of the Buddha, in its essence, did not turn away from the realisation upon earth, but only from what is false in the conception of the world and in the activities as are pursued in the world. Thus when it teaches that one must escape from life, it is not to escape from a life that would be the expression of the truth but from the illusory life as it is lived ordinarily in the world.

Sri Aurobindo tells us that in order to reach the truth and to have the power of realising this truth you must join the spiritual consciousness to a progressive mental consciousness.

And these few words certainly prove that such was the original conception of the Buddhistic teaching.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

THE TEACHINGS OF THE MOTHER

EDUCATION

IX

IN "Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on Education", the Mother prefaces her scheme of education by a chapter on The Science of Living. This is a significant introduction of the subject inasmuch as it shows that she proposes to attack the problem of education at its very roots, and has no mere suggestions to offer for a patchwork reform or readjustment. The title of the chapter, The Science of Living, implies at once the knowledge and the way, the theory and the practice. But it is no mental theory, evolved by a combination of observation and reflection and matured by experience that she propounds. It has had its origin in spiritual knowledge, in the intuition that does not perceive life in its apparent segments and superficies, but embraces the estuary and the whole course of it in one englobing vision. He who does not see the source and the goal of life can know neither its meaning nor its purpose. What he sees is disjointed fragments of its flowing surface, and the waves and ripples it throws up from moment to moment. He who sees not the whole knows not the truth of the parts.

The Mother does not look upon education only as the learning of languages and literatures, storing one's mind with the ideas and thoughts of others, amassing information on various subjects, cultivating the arts and sciences, equipping oneself with the knowledge necessary for earning one's living, or even as a means of imparting a veneer of culture and refinement, and a developing sense of the moral and other values of life. Education for citizenship, education for national service, education for international fellowship and cooperation, education for world unity and peace —the supreme watchwords of the most progressive of modern

educationists—are not, according to the Mother, the central and real object of education, though each of them has its place in her comprehensive scheme. She regards them as the inevitable results of a sound, integrative education, but only as results. She goes straight to the bedrock questions of the aim of human life and the ultimate truth and mission of the living core of the human being, and bases her system of education on them.

"An aimless life is always a miserable life.

Everyone of you should have an aim. But do not forget that on the quality of your aim will depend the quality of your life.

Your aim should be high and wide, generous and disinterested; this will make your life precious to yourself and to all.

But whatever your ideal, it cannot be perfectly realised unless you have realised perfection in yourself."

"An aimless life is always a miserable life."

What, then, should be the aim of our life ? To be a scientist, an efficient technologist, an artist, a poet, a philosopher, a professor, an educationist, an engineer, a business man, an architect, a literary man, an administrator, a politician—any of these may be considered a sufficient reply to the above question. But the implications of the Mother's rider to her dictum are very important : "But do not forget that on the quality of your aim will depend the quality of your life." One can, of course, aim at being a scientist or a technologist, a politician or a business man; but will it ensure the highest "quality" of one's life ? Will it be a sure guarantee against the all too common misery and unhappiness of our earthly existence ? Will it resolve the thousand conflicts, inner and outer, which tear the being of man, and promote the integration of his personality ? Will it make his relations with the world perfectly happy and harmonious, and do away with all causes of friction and frustration ? Will it enable him to conquer

and convert the old Adam in him, and make for a spontaneous flowering of his innate divinity ? Will it enable him to rise serenely superior to honour and dishonour, fame and obloquy, loss and gain, victory and defeat, and even life and death, and remain unshaken in the midst of the blows and buffets of the world-forces —master of himself and master of his environment ?

This is what the Mother means by the "quality of your life" —the quality of perfect freedom and mastery by self-transcendence, the quality of a happy and harmonious living. It is a qualitative education that the Mother has in view, as against the quantitative, which is the craze and cry of the moment. The quantitative is but a natural incidence of the qualitative upbringing. The objective is but a translation of the subjective in terms of the external life, the physical of the psychological, and not the other way round. This is a truth towards which modern man has just begun to orient himself, and even materialistic science seems to be veering round. It is too late in the day to doubt or dispute the fact that neither philosophy nor science, neither arts nor literature, neither technology nor trade and commerce can produce a personality like the Buddha or the Christ, St. Paul or Plotinus, Eckart or Brother Lawrence, Sri Chaitanya or Sri Ramakrishna. It is a matter of history how Alexander the Great felt as a pigmy before Diogenes, and in our own times, how the enlightened West bowed its head before the towering personality of Swami Vivekananda. What is it that goes into the making of such heroic souls ? Where are the tap-roots of human nature which, once touched, would burst out into the splendour of the nobility and majesty, purity and power, dignity and beauty, and peace and bliss that we find in the spiritual personalities of the world ? Is not there something secret, something mysterious, some invisible fount of incalculable potentialities, latent in man and inaccessible to his normal mind and its practical strivings ? That secret has to be unearthed, that source of potentialities to be unsealed. This unearthing and unsealing is the primary object of education.

"Your aim should be high and wide, generous and disinterested; this will make your life precious to yourself and to all."

The aim should not only be high and wide—higher than the normal level of human life and far extended beyond its habitual frontiers—but generous and disinterested. Generosity involves self-sacrifice, and disinterestedness a stepping back out of the petty circle of personal, egoistic interests into the tranquil detachment of a superpersonal existence. It is to embrace the unity of life, and live not as a separate self, imprisoned in the sordid round of its selfish desires, but as a universal man, living at once for himself and for all. Man's true, immortal individuality is not abolished in the poise of the superpersonal detachment, but finds its own fulfilment in the fulfilment of all. And he lives not only for his true self and for all, but even for the omnipresent Reality, which is the Self of both himself and all.

This aim, which the Mother holds up before man, is no visionary dream, but the key to his eventual destiny, whether, in the dimness of his bounded mind, he is aware of it or not. Down the untold centuries of his evolution on earth, this has been the hidden spring of all his strivings in the direction of culture and civilisation. To doubt it is to doubt the creative truth of his life; to deny it would be fatal to his progress. His present plight is, indeed, the result of such an ignorant denial. He has fallen from the high ideals of life into what can be best described as civilised barbarism. He has allowed his life to become an uncurbed riot of passions and animal appetites. He can save himself only by turning again towards those higher ideals and values which alone can lift him out of his anguished darkness into light.

The aim which the Mother invites man to accept will raise him from his human-animal life of ignorance, struggle and suffering into the divine-human, of which unity and harmony are the coping stone, and freedom, purity and the power of knowledge the constituent factors. It will transfer the centre of gravity

of the human consciousness from the surface to the depths, from the field of fugitive appearances and mortal forms to the undying fire in the sanctuary within them. The aim is, in short, to discover the soul, to know one's real self, of which Socrates speaks with all his disarming insistence, and let it blossom in its native beauty. It will mean an inversion of the method followed in education today. In this new system, the first appeal will be to the real, the inner man in the student, and not to the apparent. When the inner man is awakened, he can take possession of his outer nature and prepare it to be a perfect reflection of his harmony and happiness, peace and power. The struggle for existence is, then, replaced by a spontaneous unfolding of the real man. Material circumstances yield to his will and power.

"But whatever your ideal, it cannot be perfectly realised unless you have realised perfection in yourself."

The aim, in the last analysis, is "to be perfect even as the Father in Heaven is perfect." An unimpeded flowering of the soul is, indeed, the sole aim of education. Human life is not a gamble of chance and contingency, nor a lump of clay to be fashioned at random by the freaks and fantasies of our purblind intellect. It is the field for the evolution of the soul, the vehicle for the self-expression of the Spirit. Nothing short of perfecion can be its destined goal—a many-sided and harmonious perfection of all the powers and faculties of our entire organic being. The function of education is the compassing of this manifold perfection.

The system of education which envisages this perfection as its aim starts from the perception of the unity of universal existence and the unity of purpose behind its evolution in the material world. Refusing to be hustled or deflected by the exigencies of the hour, social, national, or international, it follows its course of light towards the building of a greater future and the rearing of a better race of men, in the calm confidence of its eventual triumph. To the mind which is obsessed with the urgent demands

of the moment, it may appear as too idealistic and unpractical. It may even appear as apathetic or antipathetic to national or humanitarian interests. It may be dubbed reactionary and obscurantist by the advocates of modern rationalism. But the soul of man was not made for the immediate moment. Its destiny is not to live as a thrall of the chances and circumstances of its material existence. It pursues its timeless evolution towards a timeless perfection. It is a pilgrim of eternity. The system of education that fails or neglects to take full account of the true nature of the soul's pilgrimage, cramps its evolution in an arbitrary mould of the clamouring present, and sterilises its hidden springs. It mistakes a particular stage of the soul's timeless journey for its ultimate goal, and, blind to the truth of even that particular stage, forces the soul to be a drudge of time and a sport of the hazards of life. The soul, of which the Veda says : "He is born a seer with the mind of discernment; an offspring of the Truth, a birth set within in the secrecy, half arisen into manifestation," is treated as an ephemeral mental being whose only object in life is the development of 'a sound mind in a sound body'. It is time such childish notions were discarded in favour of a deeper view of life and a wide, long-range reflection on the problem of education. The Mother's scheme of integral education will appeal to those who have developed such a deeper view, and contemplate human life as a field of infinite possibilities of perfection.[1]

But what is perfection ? The Mother does not mean by it an exclusive or selective development of any power or faculty, or even of many of them, but a harmonious development of all of them. The whole human being must flower as a single entity. "Perfection is not a maximum or an extreme. It is an equilibrium and a harmonisation."[2]

How is this harmonious perfection to be achieved ?

"To work for your perfection the first step is to become

[1] "Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man."—Vivekananda
[2] *Words of the Mother*

conscious of yourself, of the different parts of your being and their respective activities. You must learn to distinguish these different parts one from the other, so that you may find out clearly the origin of the movements that occur in you, the many impulses, reactions, and conflicting wills that drive you to action. It is an assiduous study which demands much perseverance and sincerity..."

Evidently, it is the path of introversion and introspection that the Mother advises for being conscious of oneself and able to distinguish the different parts of one's being, and their different faculties and functions. First consciousness, then control. It is not possible to control our nature unless we know what it is, how it is constituted and how it works. One cannot mend a machine unless one knows its mechanism in detail. So, the very first step towards self-conquest is self-observation and self-correction. But, as we all know, it is no easy job. "For man's nature, especially his mental nature, has a spontaneous tendency to give an explanation favourable to whatever he thinks, feels, says and does. It is only by observing these movements with great care, by bringing them, as it were, before the tribunal of our highest ideal, with a sincere will to submit to its judgment, that we can hope to educate in us a discernment which does not err."

Sincerity and perseverance are the essential pre-requisite. But what do they mean ? According to the Mother, sincerity is a sustained effort to organise our whole nature with its myriad elements and movements, all fully developed and none repressed or neglected, round the ideal which the most enlightened part of our being has set itself to realise. It means resolving into harmony[1] all that is disorderly and discordant in our nature, fusing the heterogeneous parts into a harmonious whole. "For if we truly want to progress and acquire the capacity of knowing the truth of our being, that is to say, the one thing for which we

[1] Cf. "The harmony of the soul, taken as a whole, is virtue"—Plato.

have been really created, that which we can call our mission on earth, then we must, in a very regular and constant manner, reject from us or eliminate in us whatever contradicts the truth of our existence, whatever is in opposition to it. It is thus that little by little all the parts, all the elements of our being could be organised into a homogeneous whole around our psychic centre. This work of unification demands a long time to be brought to some degree of perfection. Hence, to accomplish it, we must arm ourselves with patience and endurance, determined to prolong our life as far as it is necessary for the success of our endeavour." And perseverance is what the Gita calls abhyasa, a resolute persistence in the pursuit of an ideal, even in the teeth of repeated obstacles and failures. A perfect sincerity and an unfaltering perseverance of effort can never fail to achieve the organisation of life of which the Mother speaks.

On the same question of organisation, the Mother says: "All the misadventures of life come from a lack of organisation of life. You live from moment to moment, take things as they arrive, somehow or other. Or, you try a mental organisation which does not at all agree with the truth and is therefore thwarted at each step. But if life is organised according to a higher principle, without the gropings that usually attend it, that is to say, following every minute a precise indication with regard to what is to be done and how it is to be done, then things can be arranged without mishaps."[1]

The above statement is based upon the truth that there is an intelligent Will behind all movements of the world, and that if we can attain to a union of our will with that all-initiating and all-directing Will, our life comes to acquire a serene spontaneity of expression, which is now incomprehensible to our groping, ignorant mind, driven by desire and self-will. The spontaneity which excites our wonder in the life of nature can as well be ours, not darkly automatic or blindly instinctive, but held and enjoyed

[1] *The Yoga of Sri Aurobindo*—Part VIII—by Nolini Kanta Gupta.

in the full light of a higher consciousness. All universal life is, indeed, labouring in its inscrutable way to achieve this conscious spontaneity of self-expression. This is the secret urge behind the evolutionary ascent of life on earth. What has begun in the darkness of the unconscious and progressed through the dimness of the semi-conscious into the blurred translucence of the human mind, will be consummated in the plenary light and impeccable rhythm of the superconscious unity of the One. Man's gropings and stumbles will be replaced by a spontaneous growth and fulfilment in the endless joy of an organic pattern of harmonious living.[1] To be spontaneous is to be divine, as the Mother says.

Along with this dual work of purifying the various parts of our being and unifying and harmonising them, we must take special care to achieve perfection in their outer instrumentation also, otherwise the inner movements, however harmonious and graceful in themselves, will be dwarfed or disfigured in their life-expression. It is a common enough experience even with those who have advanced far on the path of purification that the outer is often found to be either too opaque, or too crude and turbid to express the subtle rhythm and radiance of the inner. When the higher truth manifests in us, it must find our mental being rich enough in its endowments and developments, and supple enough in its receptivity and assimilation to give "the idea that is seeking to express itself a form of thought which preserves its force and clarity." If the idea cannot get an appropriate form of thought, it will lose much of its intrinsic force and fail of its purpose in life. The thought, too, in its turn, must find the right words that can express, without warping or diminishing, its own original content. A brilliant thought, clothed in obscure or insipid

[1] "Behold the spring, how the water wells up effortlessly and overflows. It does not act; that is its nature. Thus it is with the man who conforms to Tao. He does not plan or will any action. Yet the right action flows out of him, influencing all. Then he is like Heaven, which is naturally high, like Earth, which is naturally solid, like the sun and the moon, which of themselves give light. What need of willing and striving ?...the man of wisdom carries out no action of his own; even a Master among sages originates nothing, beyond sharing in the Rhythm of the universe."—Lao-Tse.

words, will never evoke the right feeling, and will fail to carry conviction. "And this formula in which you embody the truth should be made articulate in all your sentiments, all your willings and acts, all the movements of your being. Finally, these movements themselves should, by constant effort, attain their highest perfection." The Mother means that the truth you have realised in the depths of your being must find a full and flawless expression in all your life and nature. You must become a transparent channel of the truth that seeks to manifest in you. There must not be a single element or a single movement even in your most external physical nature that may distort or darken the manifesting truth.

It must be clearly understood that the old-world ascetic form of self-discipline, which starves or atrophies most of the dynamic and expressive parts of human nature, has no place in the Mother's scheme of education. For, according to her, education is a rehearsal for a full and perfect life on earth, and neither a strenuous preparation for a flight out of it, nor a scramble for a coarse satisfaction of its passing material interests. She teaches us that we can set no limits to human achievement. Whatever a man has faith in, he can achieve. Whatever he aims at with an unflagging sincerity, he can attain. It must be small minds, indeed, that have not cared to fathom the depths of human potentialities, that seek to set bounds to man's aspirations and, in the name of reason and prudence, counsel contentment with the practical and utilitarian standards of life. He who is born to soar is thus carefully educated to creep and crawl. When the vision of man is dimmed and the wings of his imagination are clipped, his mind wallows in the objects of sense and elects to subserve the material ends of life. It is then that darkness enfolds his being. It is then that his soul shrinks, his culture decays, and his society tends to become a sink.

RISHABHCHAND

SHIVA*

I

TO the pilgrim of eternity who has become aware and developed all the faculties and cleansed the doors of perception in his personality, Existence presents a grandiose spectacle of a gigantic pagoda of endless tiers upon tiers of planes of Consciousness established indeed massively on Earth below, but tapering and merging in the vast Skies above. At the base is found the monstrous dragon of the Inconscient, with its python coils of dark, cavernous, bottomless depths, where consciousness seems to have lost itself in a profound death-like slumber and therefore the negation of all movement or even, it appears, the possibility of it. At the summit is glimpsed the golden or the diamond Superconscient with its endless infinite layers of self-luminous sun-realms of Supernal being where consciousness is so widely and intensely concentrated that no falling off is at all possible. In between are to be seen the blue zones of the higher minds (Overmind, Intuition, Higher Illumined Mind, and the Higher Thinking Mind), the yellow regions of the mind, the green pastures of the vital and the crimson planes of the physical. Each world is organised for the experience or Bhoga of the Purusha or the Soul, the consciousness which sees, in one mode of his being with the Prakriti or Nature, the consciousness which executes, in her corresponding mode of becoming—physical, vital, mental, higher mental, or supramental. Man is a microcosm and therefore carries within him parts which can make him contact and enter into communion with any of these worlds. But the higher luminous regions of the Superconscient are perceived usually only in

* From *Last Poems* of Sri Aurobindo.

a state of Samadhi or yogic trance, called Sushupti or deep sleep by the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. Even so, each world is experienced exclusively of the others, because indeed, the part of the Yogi's being whose development and concentration have enabled him to do so, is functioning exclusively of his other parts, especially of the surface physical mind and vital. In fact, we have even an emphatic declaration from some great spiritual explorers that a wakeful realisation of the superconscient is an impossible task. A wakeful realisation of the Static Brahman or Atman is the highest achievement of the Jivanmukta, Paramahamsa, the goal of Vedanta. But the ancient seers of the Rig Veda have announced that the supreme aim of life is to live in the vision of the Supramental Sun, and realise one's inner identity with the essential Personality of the Sun: *Jyokcho sūryaṁ dṛśe; sohamasmi.* But even so, it is affirmed that we cannot live in the full blaze of the Sun in the physical consciousness. Individuals on Earth can ascend to the Supermind and reach the Superconscient, by turning their minds to It, *dhiya yo naḥ pracodayāt.* But that is all. The Sadhana of Integral Yoga aims at an awakening and integration of all the parts and planes of being in the human personality and so the simultaneous realisation of all worlds and planes of consciousness becomes possible in its practice. So the Integral Yogi sees in one global, simultaneous vision the two poles of Existence, the Superconscient above and the Inconscient below and discovers that the Supermind is involved here in the heart of the Nescience, as it is found self-existent and self-luminous in the Superconscient and what is more, the evolution of the Supermind in the world of the Inconscient by the pressure of the Supermind from above and the marriage of the two are the grand and inevitable consummation of terrestrial creation. Sri Aurobindo's sonnet, Shiva, hymns this vision of the mystic marriage of the Superconscient and the Inconscient.

II

The state of consciousness in which the poem has its origin is best described as Jagrat-Samadhi, wakeful superconscious trance, a poise where consciousness is 'a closed and single weft' so that 'the far and near are one in spirit-space' and 'the moments there pregnant with all time'. This is a state of simultaneous integrality of Time, a whole-consciousness of the successive relations of all things in which what we call past, present and future stand together and are eternally present. What is seen in this condition works itself out successively in different space-time dimensions and worlds. Again this is a recurring phenomenon, repeating itself at some point or other in some world or other of the multitudinous points and planes of consciousness. So, what is described here is eternally happening and therefore couched in the present tense of expression. The poet has entered into the consciousness of the World-Artist and Architect, which holds all the details of His work viewed as a whole, intended or reviewed in His mind or arranged in a plan for execution. And so, he begins with the vision of the Transcendent Lord and Master of all existence, the Superconscient Shiva:

> On the white summit of eternity
> A single Soul of bare infinities,
> Guarded he keeps by a fire-screen of peace
> His mystic loneliness of nude ecstasy.

Eternity is beyond the many worlds of the physical, vital, mental, Higher Mental (starting from the Higher Thinking Mind and ending with the Overmind) organisations of Space and Time and it is not a single plane or level but has a many-runged ladder, leading higher and higher in infinite consciousness. The abode of Shiva is on the summit, the very top of the ladder of eternity. That is a white zone beyond all colours, and the source of all

colours and the fusion of all colours, for each manifested region of consciousness has a colour peculiar to it seen by the occult vision, but that is a region beyond all manifestation. That is a state of massed, concentrated consciousness with all its powers of manifestation ingathered, pent up and solidified into a snow-white perfection. This congealed, undifferentiated, undiffused consciousness is one without a second. Purusha and Prakriti at this level are fused into One supreme Purushottama, Paratpara Shiva and so a single Soul with all Nature held within in static potentiality. This stark, companionless Reality, the Parameshwara is bare, free from all finite qualities or attributes without any scar or sinews or imperfections, *Akāyam, Avraṇam, Aśnāviram.* Everything about Him is infinite and he has only infinities of Truth, Light, Power, Beauty, Peace and Ananda without any trace or shadow of their opposites and in their utmost white purity and perfection. In the epic lines of Savitri :

> There was no second, it had no partner or peer;
> Only itself was real to itself.
> A pure existence safe from thought and mood,
> A consciousness of unshared immortal bliss,
> It dwelt aloof in its bare infinite,
> One and unique, unutterably sole.
> A Being formless, featureless and mute
> That knew itself by its own timeless self,
> Aware for ever in its motionless depths,
> Uncreating, uncreated and unborn,
> The One by whom all live, who lives by none,
> An immeasurable luminous secrecy
> Guarded by the veils of the Unmanifest,
> Above the changing cosmic interlude
> Abode supreme, immutably the same,
> A silent Cause occult, impenetrable,—
> Infinite, eternal, unthinkable, alone.

This loneliness of the Pure Existent, Sachchideka Shiva is not mere isolation or detachment from all manifestation in an indifferent aloofness, a negation of all contact, void and empty of any feeling or the possibility of it, but a positive state of the highest intensity of Bliss, an even and objectless self-ecstasy, where the subject, object and the relating medium are fused in an identity and therefore without any of the associations or covers of Ananda. Ananda in the planes of manifestation is not naked but covered by the threee factors of experience, the person experiencing, the object experienced and the contact of these two ends. But the Ananda of Parashiva is a nude ecstasy, the essential delight of Existence, pure and simple and naked. This Ananda Kaivalya is the most sacred and secret of all experiences of the Infinite Consciousness and one which is the least comprehensible or attainable by even the most intense energising of consciousness. Not by Tapasya, however profound, but by Para Bhakti is this state realised. Only the true initiate realises it and so it is mystic. But then none of the vehicles or substances of the realms below, not even the mighty Gods of the Overmind could bear the onrush of this nude ecstasy of Shiva. So in His infinite compassion, He keeps this Ananda guarded from all unreceptive instruments and personalities and worlds. The ocean of transcendent Ananda is protected from overflowing by the solid, granite blocks of peace. Peace acts as the screen for Ananda. Shiva sends to his devotees streams of the higher peace, Shanti as his first precious gift and when the Adhar has assimilated these and therefore become fit to receive the divine Ananda, He pours this Ananda into them. But this very peace is like fire scorching and burning and therefore driving away the time-bound creatures with their minds and hearts turned towards the petty pleasures of the finite consciousness and not at all aspiring for and therefore not ready for the descent of the immortal Ananda. Again, this higher peace acts as a purifying force like fire, removing the dross of Rajas in the being and widening it to give room to Ananda. No profane eyes can see this nude ecstasy or even dream of approaching it for there is this fire-screen

of peace. None can molest it for the fire guards it. Only those with the fire of aspiration and calm adoration and Bhakti, the true lovers of the Beloved can taste this nude ecstasy. In the words of the Kathopanishad : *Yamevaisha vrinute tena lavhyastasyaisha Atma vivrunute tanumswam.* "But only he whom this Being chooses can win Him; for to him this Self bares His body." But the white-fire of peace is a spiritually concrete description of the threefold Chit-tapas or energy of self-conscience which projects the worlds of the highest creation of the Spirit, the Parardha of Satyaloka, Tapoloka and Janaloka, by dwelling upon pure existence, active power of Chit and active Delight as the basis. It is Agni in His own pure home, burning with an incandescent white and in an absolute imperturbable tranquillity and peace. Shiva, the transcendent is guarded by this Agni who acts as the screen of Sachchidananda. So we have in the great Sri Vidya tradition which hymns the Transcendent as Lalita—the state when Ishwara and Ishwari are in fused identity, *Shivashaktyātmika*—a description of the Mahamayayavanika and Thiraskarini and Jwalamalini guarding the supreme Anandamayee and the sadhaka too is enjoined to invoke the protection of these forces to guard him from all undivine and antidivine influences. So remain 'the unconned secrets white-fire-veiled of the last beyond'. Indian spiritual tradition has realised Shiva as having his abode on the summit of the snow-white mountain of Kailasa, which again is at the top of Mahameru, the great central hill of consciousness, *Merusringanilaya Kailasagirivāsa*, and eternally engaged in a tranquilly intense tapasya of loneliness, Prasanta tapodhana, and with the moon of Spiritual Ananda as the very crest of his being, *Nityānanda Chandrasekhara*, holding all shakti and immortal Ananda ingathered and therefore perceived as the pure crystalline Linga, *Shaktinirbhara Shuddhasphatika* Lingarupa, with the White Bull of Peace and Agni serving at the same time as a faithful vehicle, constant attendant and even as a screen on the road to the Divine, *mahokṣavara Nandi vāhana.*

III

This nude ecstasy is the Bliss of contemplation of one's own essential nature of Sachchidananda, *swasrupanusandanam*, which reveals in an endless progression, deeper and deeper and wider and wider levels and kinds of Bliss in different organisations of consciousness. Each kind of Ananda so seen and brooded upon is executed by the Chit-tapas in the form of a creation of that particular world. So are created the graded worlds of the sevenfold existence and each world has its own reflection of the original Ananda in the principles or *vyahṛtis* of the supermind, overmind, higher mind, mind, vital and physical, the three higher retaining unity even in the duality and the multiplicity of world experience and the three latter having lost it. So arise the Ananda in the worlds of light and the Ananda in the worlds of darkness and the greatest of all these possibilities is the Ananda of total oblivion of all consciousness, the inconscience and once this is envisaged in the silent contemplation, it is also established by the conscious-force which manifests out of its white radiance the wide range of colours and creates the various worlds. As there is no end to being oblivious of one's consciousness, so there is no end to the depths of the Inconscient. In each plane, except the principle on which it is organised all the subtler and higher elements are kept behind in a state of involution secretly supporting the frontal manifestation and acting always through a veil till the Inconscience is reached where all the elements (physical, vital, mental, higher mental, and the supra-mental) are involved and deeply buried below the surface. This Ananda of Involution is an exciting adventure and therefore intense indeed, but a new and an almost endless, enormous, immense delight opens itself in evolving all that is involved progressively till the two poles of existence meet and realise their essential secret, inmost identity. Once this vista of a new cycle of endless creation is seen in the contemplative vision of the Superconscient Shiva it touches the very depths of His being and the Lord who allows His Chit-Shakti to work out

His visions, now comes out of that ingathered state, enamoured of the endless delight to be and the infinite future possibilities of creation, and His Grace falls on the Inconscient which contains all the potentialities involved in its tenebrous womb.

> But, touched by an immense delight to be,
> He looks across unending depths and sees
> Musing amid the inconscient silences
> The Mighty Mother's dumb felicity.

Casting his gaze from the Transcendent heights upon all the worlds below with a view to realise the Ananda of evolutionary ascent and to establish the Ananda of the Superconscience 'in other conditions than the supracosmic, in cosmic being, and to find its heaven of joy and light even in the oppositions offered by the terms of an embodied material existence, by struggle therefore towards the joy of self-discovery', the Divine chooses this world with an inconscient base as His special field of experiment. In the unending scales of the ladder of existence the lowest rung has the greatest of dynamisms and new possibilities potential in it. So when the other worlds remain, however glorious in themselves, only typal and fixed in their movements, and their beings contented in their permanently doled out qualities and quantities of Bliss, this mortal world, and only this, affords the greatest and the widest and even infinite scope for the realisation of various intensities and kinds of Ananda. The benignant, graceful gaze of the Lord is upon this universe and there is nothing that the aspiring mortal cannot achieve in his consciousness, for 'all can be done if the God-touch is there'. The Divine look has crossed and passed on through all the intermediary worlds from the Overmind to the subtle Physical and is focussed on this world. He sees the Inconscient Mother, with His ardent love for union with her inmost being. So Love is born in this universe by 'Love desiring love'. The Prakriti in the Inconscient is the Mighty Mother who is to be the progenitor of the puissant powers of humanity and

divinity now involved in her being, and her own resistance to all attempts to stir her into a state of conscious activity is also the hardest and most powerful and therefore does she make the new carvings and creations out of her an inviting challenge for the Divine Worker and an enduring structure when fashioned. But to begin with, the Divine Lord sees her in a state of profound torpor, irresponsive and inexpressive, plunged in an obscure sleep of blissful oblivion, dumb felicity. As Sri Aurobindo elaborates in the opening canto of Savitri :

> Across the path of the divine Event
> The huge foreboding mind of Night, alone
> In her unlit temple of eternity,
> Lay stretched immobile upon Silence' marge.
> Almost one felt, opaque, impenetrable,
> In the sombre symbol of her eyeless muse
> The abysm of the unbodied Infinite;
> A fathomless zero occupied the world.
> A power of fallen boundless self awake
> Between the first and the last Nothingness,
> Recalling the tenebrous womb from which it came,
> Turned from the insoluble mystery of birth
> And the tardy process of mortality
> And longed to reach its end in vacant Nought.

The peace, ecstasy, infinity, mystic secrecy and solitariness and contemplation of the Superconscient in the realms of light are answered and reflected by the silences, dumb felicity, unending depths and mysterious impervious solitude, and musing of the Inconscient in the realm of darkness.

IV

But now the Light of the Higher Consciousness has begun to play on the darkness of the Inconscient. The supreme Lord has

directed his look of compassion, comprehension and Grace on the musing Mother and so begins the great cosmic game of Love and the response in her own characteristic way, of Prakriti to the glance of the Divine Lover, Shivadrishti :

> Half now awake she rises to his glance;
> Then, moved to circling by her heart-beats' will,
> The rhythmic worlds describe that passion-dance.
> Life springs in her and Mind is born; her face
> She lifts to Him who is Herself, until
> The Spirit leaps into the Spirit's embrace.

The look of Shiva, the wooing Lover, is all Grace and elegance with all the delicacy, subtlety and cajoling magic of courtship. It has nothing to do with the soul-shattering, all-destroying furious stare associated with Him. It is a soul-stirring, all-entrancing "glance". It awakes even the deep slumbering Inconscient Mother preoccupied with her own obscure, dumb felicity. Not fully awake indeed, but partially awake and therefore in a state of somnambulance. This is the first sign of an obscure movement, a kind of cosmic drowse, below indeed the threshold of any organised consciousness but certainly above the crass plunge into an unconsciousness. This is the birth of the Subconscient, a first inchoate beginning of consciousness, and this dawn is succeeded by other dawns of deeper and higher levels of consciousness. Shiva's loving glance inspires love and harmony and a sense of rhythm in the heart-beats of the Mighty Mother and She likes to express her feeling of Ananda, though now only in the lowest plane of Matter, in physical circular orbits of motion and so we have the perfect rhythmic dancing motion of the worlds inspired by physical passion. As the intensity of love and aspiration for conscious union with her Lord increases the Mother puts forth out of herself higher and higher forms of consciousness with great anxiety, hurry and avidity. So Life springs in her, a sudden, unforeseen and apparently inconsequential emergence

in a world of Subconscient Matter. And it is followed by the birth of the Mind which cannot be said to spring or leap into existence with the characteristic violence of Life, but emerges slowly and passively indeed and is born. But though slow in its advent, it makes for the first time a conscious turning and communion directly possible. So the Mother can lift her face consciously to her Lover. These are the conscious willings, thinkings and feelings of aspiration for union with the Divine, the Yogic methods of Tapasya of the Mind, Heart and Will which raise the consciousness, the face of the Mother to higher and higher altitudes and deeper and deeper levels of existence and all this Yoga is directed to the realisation of the essential identity of the inmost souls of the Superconscient and the Inconscient. They are but the two apparently opposite poises of the same Spirit. The Mighty Mother is Prakriti with all Purusha involved and held back in her consciousness. The Supreme Shiva is Purusha with all Prakriti concealed in his consciousness. Both are the same essential Sachchidananda. The Mother waits in a completely consecrated Yogic trance lifting her face to her Lover and at the divinely appointed moment the Spirit in her clasps in a sweet embrace the Spirit in the Lord and this terminates the period of evolution in Ignorance and ushers in a new world based on unity and identity, the evolution in the infinite realms of Knowledge, the mystic marriage of Heaven and Earth. Shiva's compassionate glance, *karuṇāmaya katākṣa*, makes

> "The Superconscient conscious grow on earth,
> The Eternal's wonders join the dance of Time."

M. V. SEETARAMAN

Chapter I

THE DAWN FIRES (II)

THE Renaissance also engendered an unprecedented explosion of scientific and intellectual activity. Leonardo da Vinci, Copernicus, Bacon, Kepler, Vesalius, Galileo, and, somewhat later, Newton set the pace of a scientific research and invention that heralded the greatest triumphs of the human mind over physical nature. It was, indeed, a brilliant galaxy of stars of the first magnitude that shone forth in the firmament of the scientific world of this epoch. There was a universal ferment in the spirit of man. Exuberant hopes and splendid dreams animated it, and inspired it to dare everything, explore everything, achieve everything. Nothing seemed impossible to the enkindled spirit and released life-force of man. The idea that the Kingdom of Heaven is not of this world was flung into the limbo of the past, and, bathed in the Castalian waters of the Renaissance, men set about establishing a humanistic and scientific Kingdom of Heaven upon earth. In the words of Giordano Bruno, it was "a new light that dawns after a long darkness at the horizon of our knowledge, and rises apace until it will become the sun at noon." Men began to look with wondering eyes at earth and heaven, many unknown expanses and splendours of which were now revealed by the phenomenal advances in astronomy and navigation. The mediaeval feudal system collapsed, and, in its place rose centralised national states with a proud consciousness of national freedom and individuality. Slavery was almost abolished, and the dignity of man emphasised in every walk of life. Towns and cities grew in importance, and the rural life declined in proportion as the

political power passed from the hands of the feudal lords to the middle classes of people, growing in opulence and influence by the expansion of trade and commerce. It was now the power of the middle classes, the bourgeoisie, that went into the shaping of human society, just as it was the power and entrenched authority of the landed nobility that had shaped the society of the Middle Ages. In short, the Renaissance was a transition from a stately but ageworn and immobilised to a vital and dynamic culture. It was a transition from a long age of repression to a buoyant age of expression. Enfranchised from the frozen moulds of mediaeval thought and life, man in the West emerged into the wide sunlight of the world—man, the individual, asserting his dignity and freedom.

But it must be remembered that all was not new and original that the Renaissance dreamed and attempted; nor was the Middle Ages a period of darkness, as is generally imagined. Modern historical research has established beyond doubt the greatness of the later Middle Ages, and the synthetic nature of their knowledge and learning. Great revolutionary movements, crucial to human culture, are not born like mushroom in what appears at the first blush as sudden transitions. They have their roots in the past. They have their ancestors as well as their progeny. They are often born before their visible birth, and die before their actual death. There always intervenes, between the old order and the new, a period, more or less long, in which the past and the present are locked in a decisive collaboration and conflict to give birth to the future. History is the chronicle of a continuous evolutionary growth, an integral, manifold development of human culture, and not a string of neatly classified records of detached fragments of world movements. The true dimension of the historical consciousness is the meeting point of past, present and future. It contemplates time as an unbroken stream of the self-unfolding of man and his multiple self-expression in life. The true historical perspective reveals the wrestle of forces, the complex of possibilities, out of which emerge the facts and events of the world. It

reveals the panorama of the serried march of mankind towards whatever may be its ultimate destiny. Some elements of the past die and disappear for ever, some survive and merge in the present, and some, though dead, are reborn, after long or short intervals, and appear in changed guises. The present is a fluid mass in the crucible to be shaped by the combined forces of the past and the future. There are recoils and relapses, leaps and spurts, a swing of the tides, in the movement of evolution. What is gained today is lost tomorrow. What is overthrown and cast away returns by the law of atavism. Tradition contends with tradition in a war of attrition, clearing the ground for the new ideas and thoughts that appear as messengers from the unknown, heralding and moulding the ages and eras of human history. They are the potent intangibles, the real, transforming factors behind the procession of external events. And it is these intangibles that must be primarily and deeply studied in all their stresses and shiftings, if we are to grasp the essential urge and drift of any epoch of human history. But they must be studied in the context in which they operate—in the swirl and tumult of the psychological forces which at once resist and assist their materialisation. Behind the endless succession of outer events, with which the objective historian is so conscientiously occupied, there is the brilliant pageant of formative thoughts and ideas, dreams and visions; and behind this pageant, the glorious self-unfolding of the creative consciousness of the human soul, which is the immediate source and fount of all that comes into being in human culture. If the historian has no perception of this fount and the imponderable forces that spring from it into action, all that he does is to fumble about among the dead bones of brute facts, sort them out into distinct sections, trace some kind of superficial and mostly misleading correlation among them, often making the effects appear as causes and causes as effects, and present the composite result of his painstaking labour as a piece of imposing dumb show. The trends and tendencies he professes to have studied are but his uncertain deductions from a selective

consideration of dubious happenings, which easily lend themselves to various conjectural interpretations. It is this scientific and objective historical method that Napoleon had in mind when he characterised history as a fable agreed upon. It is, indeed, more often than not, a fanciful presentment of opaque events and incidents. The real, creative forces of history—the visions and aspirations of the soul—elude its grasp.

The seeds of the Renaissance were sown in the three centuries —eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth—preceding the epoch historically known as the Renaissance. These centuries initiated the ideative forces that exploded as the Renaissance in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It was in this antecedent epoch that humanism, the first, distinctive gift of the Renaissance, was born. It gathered momentum under the powerful influence of Dante, Petrarch and Boccacio. It received considerable impetus from the impact of the Byzantian scholars who were transferred to Italy at that time. It was in this epoch that philosophical thought showed definite signs of liberating itself from theology and the insipid and sterile forms of Aristotelian dialectic, in which it found nothing better than dry, verbal abstractions and a scholastic support of the incrusted doctrines of the Church. It turned with hope and enthusiasm to Plato and the aesthetic attraction of his writings, and the refreshing love of nature they breathe. It was in this epoch that universities sprang into existence and learning and knowledge began to break out of the cramping framework of scholasticism. It was in this epoch that magnificient cathedrals rose all over Europe, testifying to an efflorescence of the architectural genius of the people. It was, again, in this epoch that the idea of nationality began to ferment into an active and creative force, which later disrupted the tense unity of the Middle Ages and exerted a transforming influence upon the Church, politics, and the prevailing patterns of culture. Culture now tended to become national, and the national States led to the splitting of the international into national Churches. Rationalism, Realism, Naturalism, and even Individualism can be traced in their germinal state in this epoch,

but their connotations underwent considerable changes under the fiery breath of the Renaissance mentality.

All this goes to prove that there was not much in the Renaissance that can be called absolutely new and original. It inherited trends, tendencies, ideals and dreams that had already begun to stir the imagination and engage the active thought of the previous times. And yet it was a real renaissance, a real new birth, a revolutionary departure from the Middle Ages. In what, then, does its newness consist, and what are its distinctive gifts to the Modern Age, which it inaugurated with such a splendid burst of revolutionary, romantic ardour ?

The first outstanding gift of the Renaissance is its Humanism. But it was not the humanism of intellectual enlightenment so much—it was that too—as humanitas, man's "high state", his individuality, dignity and freedom. The concept of humanism was given a distinctly secular character. It bore the sense of the initiative of man as the architect of his own destiny. It implied a vigorous turning towards the life of the world, a passionate quest of the joy and beauty of life, a boundless curiosity, adventure, risk, success and enjoyment. Man veered round to himself, moved out of the dead shells of outworn traditions, out of the closed circles of unintelligent other-wordly pursuits, affirmed the reality and glory of earthly life, enriched his civilisation and extended it to all parts of the world, bathed in the vivifying dew of nature, and rushed forward, feeling the impulsive blood of youth pulsating in his veins, into an expanding universe, which he beheld as a perfect work of art, to conquer and create.

The nature of the victorious outburst of the Renaissance spirit is best summed up in the letter of Coluccio Salutati, the Florentine humanist and Chancellor, to an Ochamist doctor, about 1390 : "Take away the sophistic dressing, give us back a knowledge of reality....Turn above all things to poetry, whose seal is higher than that of logical knowledge, and alone is able to speak of God." It is magnificently celebrated in the monologue in the first part of Goethe's Faust, from which we quote the following lines :

"Oh ! Am I still stuck in this jail ?
This God-damned dreary hole in the wall
Where even the lovely light of heaven
Breaks wanly through the painted panes !
Cooped up among these heaps of books
Gnawed by worms, coated with dust,
Round which to the top of the Gothic vault
"A smoke-stained paper forms a crust.
Retorts and canisters lie pell-mell
And pyramids of instruments,
The junk of centuries, dense and mat...
Your world, man ! World ? They call it that !

Ha ! What a river of wonder at this vision
Bursts upon all my senses in one flood !
And I feel young, the holy joy of life
Glows new, flows fresh, through nerve and blood !
Was it a god designed this hieroglyph to calm
The storm which but now raged inside me,
To pour upon my heart such balm,
And by some secret urge to guide me
Where all the powers of Nature stand unveiled around me ?
Am I a God ? It grows so light !
And through the clear-cut symbol on this page
My soul comes face to face with all creating Nature.
At last I understand the dictum of the sage :
"The spiritual world is always open,
Your mind is closed, your heart is dead;
Rise, young man, and plunge undaunted
Your earthly breast in the morning red."

"Plunge undaunted your earthly breast in the morning red" —that, indeed, is the essential spirit in which the Renaissance launched forth upon the adventure of life in a brightening, expanding universe. Its gospel was a passionate affirmation of life, which

is the basic urge and achievement of the Modern Age. It was a violent swing from the religious to the secular mode of living. But, as it happens in all violent swings and exclusive turnings, something vital was lost, something without which even the most prosperous material life feels an aching void within itself, and is, sooner or later, bound to languish and perish in a slow disintegration or a cataclysmic destruction. The victory of the new movement carried within itself the seeds of its own defeat. Platonism or rather Neo-Platonism of the Florentine Academy dominated the Renaissance scene for a brief spell, only to be ousted again by the "scientific-minded" Aristotle.

The natural and inevitable result of secularised humanism was the advent of science. According to Whitehead, "Since the time when a babe was born in a manger, nothing came into the world so quietly as modern science." Science took possession of the world and revolutionised it. It revolutionised human culture and civilisation. It revolutionised human thought and life and the very fabric of human society. Leadership in thought and culture passed from the East to the West.

If we look closely behind this sudden and radical transition from the Middle Ages to the Modern Age, we find that it was a crucial struggle that occupied the stage of the West, a struggle between the values of the Spirit and the reality of Life and Matter, with the Reason of man as the apple of discord. In the Middle Ages Reason or rationalism was a zealous ally and advocate of faith. It was the high priest of the Spirit, though a somewhat austere and sombre priest. In the beginning of the Modern Age, it played the renegade. It forswore the Spirit, sheered off from faith, and offered its services to Matter. Then, by a sudden nostalgic impulse, it retraced its steps, halted and hesitated for a brief moment, and finally went over to the side of Matter.

(*To be continued*)

RISHABHCHAND

THE LIFE DIVINE

(*An Outline*)

Vol. II

Chapter XXVII

The Gnostic Being

WE are faced with an almost impossible difficulty of gaining some precise mental description of the supramental or gnostic existence which lies beyond overmind and escapes the grasp of mental knowledge. The supramental nature would be a perfect integration of the spiritual nature and would contain a total spiritualisation of the lower Nature. This is but a general idea; in the gnostic change the evolution passes into a radical reversal of consciousness where mental cognition no longer suffices.

Mental nature is based on the finite; the supramental on the Infinite, and sees even the greatest multiplicity, and the strongest contradictions from the standpoint of oneness. Mental nature, on the other hand, acts from the standpoint of division, and its sense of oneness is limited. The mind cannot forecast or lay down what the supramental change will be; for the supramental does not act in obedience to a lower impulse, but by an innate spiritual vision and according to an inherent reality. Its movement is calm, spontaneous and plastic, and arises out of its identity with the truth and its intimate oneness with all. Only a deduction can be made of the passage from Overmind to Supermind and a vaguely constructed idea of the first status of the evolutionary supramental existence.

The passage from Overmind to Supermind is marked by a long-prepared transition from an evolution in the Ignorance to a progressive evolution in the Knowledge. The supramental being must descend into a world of evolutionary becoming and unfold its power of gnosis within the terrestrial nature. The process of earth-existence is the concealing of the infinite Reality first in a succession of incomplete half-figures and afterwards in half-luminous figures ready for a progressive revelation.The descent of supermind, which has the power of free self-determination may be accomplished by its taking up into itself mental nature, life nature and the material body, without changing its own essential character. It can hold back knowledge and put forward what is needed at each stage, in accordance with the Divine Will. It thus manifests overmind and a world of ignorance below. The evolution above overmind must move in the power of the truth-consciousness, by a conscious Knowledge and not in the Ignorance.

As there has been established a mental Consciousness so now there will be established a gnostic Consciousness which will shape a race of gnostic spiritual beings and take up all of earth-nature that is ready. It will also receive all that is ready to descend into the earth field. By this emergence from below and the descent from above the evolution has proceeded. In the previous stages there has been a division between the surface self and subliminal self; the former has been formed by the upward emergence, and the latter has been the channel for the downward influx. Thus a mental or vital being had been formed from the subliminal parts. But before the supramental change can begin the veil between the subliminal and surface the must be broken; and so the influx will be into the whole being and not merely the subliminal part. By this double movement,—the total influx from above, and the emergence of the concealed supramental force from below—the rule of the Inconscient will disappear and the Ignorance will be removed. Thus a first formation of gnostic consciousness can be established.

The creation of supramental being will carry with it the other gradations—intuition, overmind and above—and establish all gradations of ascending formations of the gnostic light (where gnostic means a consciousness not based on the Ignorance). There would be the scale of ascent for all life to rise beyond the mental ignorance. And thus the presence of the supramental light will have its consequence in the whole evolution, awakening the hidden Truth-Power everywhere in Nature. The discord and clash of struggle would change into harmonic steps of a progressing life-order. A freer play of intuition and sympathy and understanding would enter into human life; and at all stages there would be the response to the inner Consciousness-Force. Thus the intervention of supermind would not annul the evolutionary principle but it would harmonise and tranquillise the difficult process of the evolutionary emergence.

Supermind is founded in the unitarian, integralising and harmonic consciousness. Overmind can allow contradictions as part of a wholeness, supporting each other though divergent. But here the individual being is acted upon rather than possessed by the secret knowledge for action. An overmind creation might therefore develop into something separate from the surrounding world of Ignorance. But the supramental being would create a harmonic unity with all levels of the Ignorance. Both integrality and a harmonious order would be at work in Nature.

A gnostic race would not be made according to a single type. There would be an infinite diversity although its consciousness would be one in its basis. Below the supermind would be the degrees of overmind and intuitive gnosis; at the summit would be individual beings who would ascend beyond a supermind formulation to higher self-realisations in bodily form. Each in the supramental race would be a unique formation of the Being.

The gnostic individual would be the consummation of the spiritual man. All his action would originate from the Spirit's divine governance of Nature. He would feel the Divine in every centre of his Consciousness and in every cell of his body. In all

workings of Nature he would be aware of the Supernature, the World-Mother. He would thus live in complete sympathy with all in the universe. There would be no confusion or distortion of different harmonies in his infallible working out of multitudinous order. The gnostic individual would be in the world but would also exceed it in his consciousness.

The three mysteries of existence—the individual, the cosmos and the Supreme—would find a united fulfilment of their harmony in the supramental being. He would be the complete, integrated individual, with complete self-knowledge and self-mastery. In the lower grades of gnostic being there would be a limitation of self-expression in order to formulate some element out of the totality. In the supramental being however, the diversity would not be secured by limitation, but by a diversity of expression; each would be a new totality and harmony. What would be expressed or held behind would depend on the truth of the thing that had to be done through the individual.

The supramental being would be the cosmic individual, seeing and feeling all as himself. What we most suffer from in our outer life is our ignorance of others, so that there is a conflict between ourselves and the world. At present to harmonise ourselves with the world we have either to enforce ourselves upon it or become subservient to it. For the supramental being this difficulty would not exist; for all movement would be as part of himself, and he would see their right relation and the right expression of that relation.

Under the law of the Ignorance there is the conflict between the individual and the universe, but this is because we affirm the ego and not the one Self in all. Only the supramental consciousness—and not even the spiritual mentality—holds the true relation between the individual and the universe. There would be a unity with the cosmic self, and not bondage to the Ignorance, but a power to act on the Ignorance in the light of the Truth.

The supramental being would freely manifest truth-power

of one consciousness. All its movements would express the joy of the Spirit, seeking and bringing the delight of the Divine in all. It will be more positive than the altruistic effort to take others' joy and grief, for he will bring the power of transcending this duality and the relative happiness of our limited nature.

The gnostic being has the will, the knowledge and the power. Its action springs from the pure bliss of the spirit; and each act will be an expression of self-fulfilment. This consciousness of the totality and the relations of that totality distinguishes the supramental consciousness from our consciousness in the Ignorance. In each movement there will be the sense of the whole movement of an integral being and the presence of its integral bliss. The gnostic being's knowledge will be the Real-Idea of the supermind, the self-light of all the reality filling every act.

Such gnostic consciousness would not only take up our inner existence, but also transform our world-consciousness, integrating them both in the spiritual existence. At present we are subject to the Life-force and Matter, which brings about the conflict between our inner and outer life. At first our response is outwards, to the world-Nature; but in our development we move towards an inner existence which creates its own outer form of living. In the gnostic nature the inner existence will take perfect body in the outer life. Life and Matter will be taken up and adapted to his own truth; moulding life itself into the spiritual image. At first it will operate in the individual existence, but later will be effective in the common gnostic life and shaping the whole existence.

In spiritual living the inner life is of first importance; and in a world of Ignorance it is necessary to separate oneself from the outer in order to guard the inner life against the outer influence. Then one is able to act upon the world from the inner spiritual being. The gnostic being will have an inmost existence which nothing can invade or disturb. This will express the freedom of the spirit. But at the same time there will be the inner communion and oneness, embracing all existence. The peace of God

will extend into a universal calm of equality, bringing the law of peace and tranquillising all. Through his inner communion with all selves, he will be able to take all life into himself, and even embrace the Ignorance without himself entering into the Ignorance.

He will be one who is living in the universe, but who carries the universe and all its beings within him. He will have the cosmic consciousness realising the Divine in all forms and movements through an inner contact and action. By this enveloping and penetrating power of the self one with all things the inner action is maintained.

There will also be the subliminal connection with other planes of being. The happenings of this world will hence be seen in the light of all that is secret behind the physical movement. The full power of the mental and vital planes can be used for the perfection of the physical existence and will increase the power of the gnostic being in the world.

The supramental movement has no other aim except to be, to be conscious of being, and to express delight of being. In its self-sufficient rhythm it sees itself as a manifold becoming, a manifold self-knowledge and a manifold power and form of delight. In the material world this will become an evolving being, consciousness and delight of existence. In the Ignorance there is the constant spur to grow and get something done; but there is no satisfaction. But to maintain an imperfect existence cannot be the aim of our being. Yet we do not know clearly what to do and what to become. The achievement of an external action and an external construction of knowledge leads us away from knowing our souls, which is the true way of being. It is the spiritual man who discovers the soul and lives in that. The gnostic being starts from this and takes up the ignorant becoming, turning it into a luminous becoming of knowledge. Attachment will fall away because there will be the full satisfaction of self-existence. Each stage of the evolution will be a free becoming supported by the sense of the Infinite.

The supramental evolution must uplift mind, life and body into a greater and perfected way of being. In the Ignorance there is a blind seeking, but for the gnostic being there is the spirit's self-discovery. Mind seeks for the knowledge of the one underlying truth, and the truth of the diversity of that oneness; the thinking mind seeks to discover the mystery of creation. The gnostic change will give all this a new character. The finding of the one underlying truth will be the Identical discovering identity and identical truth everywhere, and discovering also the workings and relations of that identity. The revelation of diversity of manifestation will be the unveiling of the endless opulence of the truths of identity. There will be the greater intuition of truth, and the intuition of the means of utilising the truth.

In the gnostic movement of knowledge, intellectual seeking will be replaced by supramental identity and gnostic intuition, an integration between the operating consciousness, the instrumentation and the thing done. Mind merely sees objectively as not-self what it has to know; but the gnostic consciousness will know its object by a penetrating identification with it. It will know the object as part of itself, in the intimacy and accuracy of a direct internal knowledge. It will proceed towards all knowledge in the light of the one Truth of which all are the aspects. There will be an unfolding as a delivery of light out of itself, a self-illumination.

The gnostic evolution,—as in the case of mind—will lift to its highest life's seeking for its growth, conquest, satisfaction, creation, love and joy of existence. It will not act for the satisfaction of the vital ego but for the Divine, and for the increasing possession by the individual and the world of the Divine Presence. His power will be the instrumentation of the power of Supernature for bringing in the greater life. Love will be the contact and union of self with self, a closeness of soul to soul and the joy of identity, and the self-revealing diversity. Creation will be the creation of significant forms of the Eternal Force, Light, Beauty and Reality.

This new relation of spirit with mind, life and matter will reverse the relations also between spirit and the body. At present the soul expresses itself through mind and vitality with the body as instrument of action. But the body limits the expression of mind and life; for its action is subconscious rather than willed. In the gnostic way of living the will of the spirit must directly control the movements and laws of the body, and the subconscient will become conscious, penetrated with the supramental light. In the supramental being the Real-Idea will govern everything; and so idea and will of the spirit will effectuate itself in the act. This will rule existence with an entire knowledge; and the body will be turned into a responsive instrument of the Spirit.

This means that acceptance of the spiritual consciousness is not simply a drawing back from material Nature, and a ceasing to be identified with the body. If a separation from the body consciousness is a necessary step towards spiritual perfection, it is only so that the descent of the spiritual light can take up the body, and there can thus be a new liberated acceptance of Nature. Matter is also a form and substance of Brahman, and so the gnostic light can unite itself with Matter and accept it as an instrument of a spiritual manifestation. As the act of taking food has been spoken of as an offering, so the gnostic consciousness can view all the operations of Spirit with Matter. The gnostic being using Matter will feel that he is using the Spirit in this form of itself. There will be a certain respect for physical things, for their utility and service, and a care for a perfect use of his divine material.

This new relation between Spirit and the body will perfect the physical being. The body consciousness is a patient servant and asks for little on its own account. It craves for duration, health, strength, physical perfection, bodily happiness and freedom from suffering. They render into terms of Matter the power and delight of the Spirit. The gnostic force can establish these things in the body; for their opposites only come from an ignorance that does not know how to meet these forces, and from some obscurity in the physical consciousness. A supramental awareness will

restore the obscured intuitive instincts in the body and supplement them with a greater conscious action. It would bring in a right physical perception of things and a right relation to objects, and bring into the body a luminous harmony and a vast touch of the eternal repose. It will, in fact, flood the whole being with the supreme energy of Consciousness-Force.

In the mental, vital and physical being the Consciousness-Force is weakened and incomplete, and cannot harmonise the universal Energy. Nature begins in the material realm with an entire insensibility, and thus a greater endurance to suffering is found in the beginning of life. As the human evolves so his sensibility grows and he suffers more keenly. The body becomes more subtle, and man has to call in his will to control his nervous being and steel it against suffering and disaster. In the spiritual ascent the control of spirit and inner mind over the instruments increases immensely. A wide equality can pass from the mind to the vital parts and establish there an immense strength and peace. On the level of spiritual mind or overmind pain can be changed into vibrations of Ananda; so in the gnostic evolution the power of self-protection can turn away all shocks and give the body a serenity and spiritual Ananda.

The aspiration for this total delight of existence is already secretly present in our being but it is obscured by the inability of the parts of our being to seize anything more than a superficial pleasure. There is the bodily happiness, the life happiness and the mental delight, but on a higher level is the spiritual mind's call for peace and divine ecstasy. Ananda is merged, but not abolished, in supermind. And supermind in its evolutionary emergence carries in it this delight of existence. The evolution of the gnostic being would be followed by an evolution of the being of bliss. The gnostic consciousness would thus take up the peace, calm and quietude of the liberated soul into the greater ascension of liberation into bliss, the bliss of the Eternal.

On the spiritual-mind plane where ecstasy is felt as a spiritual rapture, it seems to be an inferior experience to the peace of the

Supreme. In the highest ascents of the spiritual bliss there is not the vehement exaltation and excitation but an ecstasy which is founded on the eternal peace and tranquillity. The supermind here reconciles peace and ecstasy into an intensity that fuses the calm and delight. In the gnostic consciousness not only the whole depth of the being, but all movements of Nature would be pervaded by the conscious delight of existence. Even in the mind we can experience the calm of intense delight of spiritual vision; and in the heart the delight of universal union and love; and in the will and vital an energy of delight of a divine life-power; and in the body an ecstasy from the heights of spirit and the peace of a pure spiritualised physical existence.

These are the first major consequences of the advent of supermind,—a perfection of the inner existence and also of the life and action. First we have to ask what is the place of personality in the gnostic being; and secondly what is the place of the ethical element and its fulfilment in the gnostic nature. If the ego disappears it seems that personal life and action must cease. Hence there can be no question of personality or ethical perfection. From another point of view the spiritual person may remain but is liberated into a celestial existence. It might be deduced that the gnostic individual whose ego is replaced by a universalised spiritual individual is a self without a personality. But this would create a blank of pure being; it would not be the supramental solution of a spiritual individuality persisting in experience. For in the supermind consciousness personality and impersonality are inseparable aspects of one and the same reality.

Impersonality is something universal, that takes on various shapes of its being and energy, each of which is taken by the individual being for building his personality. It is the original undifferentiated truth of things,—as love and courage are qualities belonging to persons. It is the Person who supports the impersonal; and what we call personality is but the expression of the Person in nature-action. The limited individual builds

a personal expression out of the impersonal, it is his formless unlimited self that is the true Person, containing boundless possibilities. Each among the Many is thus a unique self of the one Divine. The Divine expresses himself in the nature of existence, consciousness, bliss, knowledge which are abstract qualities. The Divine is the Being, and all impersonality and abstractions melt into the one Person.

The supramental individual will be a spiritual Person, but not a personality with a fixed character, nor a confused multi-personality. The gnostic consciousness is one of harmony, self-knowledge and self-mastery. Although personality, viewed from two opposite standpoints has been regarded as either a fixity of nature or a flux of nature, it is clear that this is the double element of all being. A fixed personality may develop out of the formative flux; but there is also a third element, the Person behind who puts forward the personality as his character. The more the inner Person comes to the front the more plastic is the personality. The ordinary personality is known by the character stamped on its life and action. But when the inner Person manifests there is a light of consciousness and a sea of energy, and at the same time the presence of a powerful being, the gnostic individual.

The gnostic Person would be a universal being with the form and expressive power of an individual. His consciousness would be infinite even in the finiteness of the expression.

Because of the self-determined nature of the gnostic individuality, there could be no ethical problem of good and evil; for such problems are creations of the mental ignorance. A universal spiritual truth manifesting itself would be a truth of being one in all, and making all to be felt as one; it would be universal good manifesting itself. There could be no ignorance leading to wrong dealing with others; for it would be a liberation into the true spiritual nature where all action is the self-expression of that truth. It is the ethical mind that declares laws which are difficult to reconcile. If oneness is the essence

of the realised spiritual nature, there is no need of a law of truth or of love. Ethics has arisen because of the force of separation and discord in man's life; it belongs to the Ignorance. Where there is truth of consciousness and being there is no conflict. The power of love, truth and right will be there in the very substance of the nature, and consequently in the action. This growth into a spiritual truth and oneness is the way of the gnostic evolution. There is then no need of standards or imposed laws of conduct.

The life of the gnostic being is a fulfilment of all true laws of becoming, since it is fully conscious and working out its own truth of existence freely. All true law is the right process of a reality fulfilling its own inherent movement. It may be inconscient as in the material Nature; or it may be fully conscious as in the gnostic being.

The life of the spirit in supernature possesses the absolute freedom of infinity, and also the absolute truth and power of that truth. Both the truth of being and the truth of will are expressed by the gnostic individual. It is an entire obedience to the All-Will of the Divine; it is the same Will active in all. Such gnostic will and consciousness aware of its oneness and its totality and the meaning of its diversities, always moves by unity, harmony and mutuality. In the individual there is also the concord of all the powers of his being. The individual in the Ignorance is separated from other beings, and hence there is the constant conflict and discord between individuals, and the conflict of the individual with the world around him. In the gnostic life there is an entire accord between the free self-expression of the being and his automatic obedience to the inherent law of the supreme Truth; they are the interconnected sides of one Truth. There is also complete accord between all the different powers of the being, even between those that seem from our mental experience contradictory.

In the supramental nature there will be no need therefore for the imposition of a fixed set of principles, for such a limitation could not adapt itself freely to the evolutionary force.

Thus the gnostic being will take up the whole of life and existence, transmuted into the harmonic self-expression of a vast Truth. The knowledge of the gnostic being would be bound only by the integral truth of the whole and the inmost truth of the object. His activity also would be free from a past action or Karma; it would have the self-evolving plasticity of the Infinite acting directly upon its own finites. It will be a liberated and harmonic Truth-expression.

The gnostic being living in the consciousness of the Infinite will be an individual centre of a larger universality and at the same time a centre of the transcendence. All his action would be in harmony with the cosmic action; and his universality would embrace even the Ignorance without being affected by it, for he would be also above in his transcendent individuality. Thus his own supreme nature would bring into the knowledge and action a large, free and perfect order. The individual nature would be nothing but a current of the Supernature. The Soul and supreme Nature would find their true oneness in him.

In the lower Nature the order is fixed and automatic. The infrarational being is obliged to live according to the mould made for it. Mind starts with this prearranged pattern but it tries to replace this fixed half-conscious law by an order based on ideas and accepted life-motives. Man is compelled to create standards of thought, life and conduct, but there is nothing permanent in his knowledge and life structures. In the passage to the spirittual life the ideal is freedom in the spirit, since it must arrive at the liberty of a free and true expression. In abandoning the mental control and seeking the freedom of spirit, one may pass through a stage of inner freedom but without any outer order; or a temporary ordered spiritual expression may be attained; or a personal order which later can freely change to express a larger truth. The gnostic being, however, stands in a consciousness where knowledge is self-existent; and the automatism of Nature and the standards of Mind are replaced by the spontaneity of a self-aware and self-active Truth.

In the gnostic being Knowledge and Will are one and cannot be in conflict. Similarly the two principles of freedom and order, which in the mental life are incompatibles, are in the supramental consciousness fundamentally one; since both are inseparable aspects of the inner spiritual Truth. The liberty of knowledge in the gnostic being is not a freedom to follow falsehood; for it is a freedom of light, not of darkness. Neither is his liberty of action a license to act upon wrong will.

Supramental consciousness is Truth-Consciousness, a power of the Infinite working out its finites, a power of the universal working out its oneness and detail. This Truth-Consciousness would be the centre of the gnostic being's seeing and action. His life would be a movement in the steps of a spiritual liberty replacing the law of the mental idea by the Divine wisdom and Will acting on and in him. In the gnostic Truth-Consciousness there must be a truth of relation of all the parts of the being, and a luminous oneness in all movements of the consciousness and action of life. In the transitional stage there would be perfect control of the mind, heart, life and body; later there would be no need of control, for all would be one unified consciousness.

The gnostic being would express his truth of being and work out the Divine Will simultaneously, for they would be one and the same motor-force. There would be a complex of forces which the gnostic consciousness would see in their true relation to each other and to the totality. There would be no play of a separative ego or contrary self-will. He would have the joy of action without attachment to action. Here the action of the person is the action of the Lord in the person, of the One in the many.

The unity of the Divine Knowledge and Force in the gnostic being gives him freedom from all law and mental standards. These would be replaced by the law of identity with the Divine Self and identity with all beings. The pervasive feeling of universal love and oneness would be in his action, and linked with the Divine Will and Knowledge; there would be no place for dis-

harmony between the powers of the nature. In the gnostic life that which is urging to manifest would be felt within and brought into action. All would be seen in the Knowledge and develop itself in the act. A working out of the divine motive would be the law of the whole existence.

A knowledge by identity using the powers of the integrated being would be the principle of the supramental life. A Higher-Mental being would act through the truth of thought, but in the supramental gnosis thought is a formulation of truth-vision and an instrument for expression of knowledge rather than arriving at knowledge. In the illumined being and in the intuitive being truth-vision and truth-contact would be the mainspring of action; while in the overmind there would be a comprehensive grasp of the truth of things which would create a foundation of knowledge and action. But this would not be as the very stuff of the consciousness, or the force of the action. Only in the supramental gnosis does the immediate grasp of the truth of things, truth-sense, truth-vision and truth-thought go back to its source of identity-consciousness, which would lead and contain everything, putting forth its self-fulfilling force in consciousness and action. There would be the play of all movements of the spiritual consciousness for a divine richness and diversity. There might thus be intermediate degrees in the manifestation of various aspects of the divine Being and Nature;—a soul and life of love, a soul and life of divine light and knowledge, and other forms. All would be a manifold unity and luminous integration.

There is a two-fold Truth-Consciousness : an inherent self-knowledge and an intimate world knowledge. The latter is not ideative knowledge, forming ideas, but an essential light of consciousness. To be is the object of the manifestation; knowledge is only the instrumentation. The gnostic life on earth would be a play of truth-conscious being, which is delivered from ignorance and inconscience and aware of its own truths and powers.

In the gnostic evolution there would be great diversity in

the poise and operations of consciousness and force and delight; and many grades would appear of the higher ascent. In the manifestation the Being may put forth only a frontal self-expression and hold all the rest behind, which would know itself in the totality of the being. This would be an act of self-knowledge, not of Ignorance. Thus a great harmonious variation would express the beauty and completeness of the gnostic existence. In dealing with the lower levels the supramental life would use this movement of its Truth of being. It would found all relations upon the common spiritual unity and harmonise the manifested difference. The gnostic influence would secure the right relation, and impose a greater harmony on the lower existence.

Such would be the nature of the gnostic individual as far as we can follow with our mental conception. This would also determine all relations of the group-life of gnostic being, which would be a collective soul-power of the Truth-consciousness. It would have the same integration of life and action, and the same realised conscious unity, and the same truth-action in the relation of each with each. There would be the freedom of the diverse play, coupled with an order of the conscious unity of souls. A complete oneness would bring the greatest richness of diversity, where difference would lead to spontaneous adoption. Nature is collective as well as individual, and here she expresses her greater oneness. Where the intuition is imperfect there can be no direct inner contact, so that each becomes a separate being, and all vital and mental interchange is hampered. In the collective gnostic life this difficulty is overcome since all divergences are carried into a unity of a luminous life-whole. This is the key to the perfection of life which would be naturally self-organisation in a gnostic creation.

There would be also the action of the gnostic beings on the life of the Ignorance. The higher spiritual-mental degrees would naturally be in touch with the supramental principle, and would draw their energy from the supramental gnosis. They would become conscious motive powers of the spirit not subjected to

the Inconscience. All Ignorance rising to these spiritual-mental levels would cease to be ignorant. Ignorance would be transmuted into a new state of consciousness. At the same time the involved principle of the gnosis would arise and lay something of its law of harmony on the Ignorance. The beings of the Ignorance would be influenced by the light of the gnosis, and would become more conscious and responsive. A new and greater order of mental beings would arise,—intuitive, partly illumined and with the higher thought-mind developed. At the higher end of the evolution the ascending ranges would rise to some supreme manifestation of pure spiritual existence, consciousness and delight.

Would this gnostic emergence mean the cessation ultimately of the evolution ? This depends whether the movement between Superconscience and Inconscience is an abiding law or only provisional. The latter seems difficult to accept because of the durability of the inconscient foundation. A displacement of the Inconscience by Consciousness would have an all-pervading effect. It seems possible that in the reproduction of the upper hemisphere in the lower triplicity the evolution would be subjected to the law of harmony, the law of unity in diversity and the diversity working out unity. It would because a harmonious development from type to higher type, so that the Inconscience might not remain an everlasting necessity.

N. PEARSON

REVIEWS

The Teachings of the Mystics. By *Walter T. Stace.* Pub. New Americal Library, 501 Madison Ave. New York 22, N.Y. pp. 240. Price 50 Cents.

"I write as one who is sympathetic to mysticism and who believes that mystical experience is in touch with that cosmic Spiritual Presence toward which the great world religions all dimly grope." This statement of the author may be said to reflect accurately the spirit of his approach and the trend of the present study. The book opens with a balanced and exhaustive Introduction to the subject discussing what Mysticism is and what it is not, underlining the common features of this Experience across all time and distance and mentioning the several interpretations put on the same phenomenon in different mental climates. This is followed by representative selections from the different sections of the spiritual literature of the world which highlight their respective mystical traditions. There are excerpts from the Upanishads, Sri Aurobindo's *The Life Divine*, Buddhist, Taoist and the Zen texts, Plotinus, famous writings in Christian, Islamic and Jewish Mysticism, and even from Arthur Koestler who has lately shown what an ignoramus he is when he begins to write on the subject of Yoga.

Discussing what is mysticism, the author quotes William James : "Our normal consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it, is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about it, parted from it by the flimsiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different." The mystical consciousness is one such form. *Mystic*, he adds, does not mean all that is 'misty' or what is 'occult'. It is a state of consciousness which 'cannot be described or analyzed in terms of any of

the elements of the sensory-intellectual consciousness with which it is wholly incommensurable.' The author excludes all visions and voices from the category of the mystical on the ground that they are composed of the elements of our sensory-intellectual consciousness. He rightly anticipates objections to this exclusion. For visions and voices can and do form part of the transcript of high spiritual and mystical experiences. Supernal realities do take these sensible forms when they impinge upon certain tiers of the human consciousness. Nor do we agree with the author in totally excluding the conceptual element from mystic experience. Certainly there is no thought-activity of the usual kind in that state of consciousness but Truth-Ideas can very well present themselves to the perceiving or silent consciousness. Be that as it may, let us follow the author in his analysis of the main characteristics of mystic experiences.

First, he writes, "they involve the apprehension of an ultimate non-sensuous unity in all things, a oneness or a One to which neither the senses nor the reason can penetrate." That One is variously described as God, as something Impersonal in terms of Life or Mind or Self. Further there are two kinds of mysticism : *extrovertive* in which the Unity or the One is apprehended outward, in the external world, and the *introvertive* which turns inward and finds the One within oneself. Speaking of the process and the nature of the development of the introvertive kind of mystical consciousness, Mr. Stace refers in passing to the 'Yoga-techniques of India' and mentions in illustration 'breathing exercises' undertaken to transcend the sensory intellectual consciousness. He also writes : "A second method is to keep repeating in one's mind some short formula of words over and over again till the words lose all meaning...." We are afraid the author has not only taken a very narrow view of Yoga but also totally missed the point even within that limited segment.[1]

[1] The author cites the testimony of poet Tennyson who had the experience of melting into infinity by simply repeating his own name to himself, to support his point that 'any

The author is profoundly impressed by a passage in the Mandukya Upanishad, which he records, sums up in a few words all that could be and has been said all the world over about this Consciousness attained on the mystic heights. "Beyond the senses, beyond the understanding, beyond all expression...it is the pure unitary consciousness, wherein awareness of the world and of multiplicity is completely obliterated. It is ineffable peace. It is the Supreme Good. It is One without a second. It is the Self."

An undifferentiated unity, a *pure* consciousness, he emphasises, are the man characteristics of this state. This consciousness, he further notes, has both negative and positive tones : peace, joy, bliss are the inalienable features of 'the positive consciousness' whereas on the negative side there is a sheer Emptiness, called Void in Buddhist thought, Nothingness or Desert or Wilderness in Christian mystic literature. And in an interesting passage, the author observes :

"Usually the two sides of the paradox are expressed in metaphors. The commonest metaphor for the positive side is light and for the negative side darkness. This is the darkness of God.[1] It is called darkness because all distinctions disappear in it just as all distinctions disappear in a physical darkness. We must not say that what we have here is a light *in* the darkness. For that would be no paradox. The paradox is that the light *is* the darkness, and the darkness *is* the light...Dionysius the Areopagite, a Christian, speaks of God as 'the dazzling obscurity which

non-sense words' may be repeated. 'It does not seem to matter what is chosen as the single point of concentration, whether it be one's breathing, or the sound of one's own name, or one's navel, or anything else, provided only it serves to shut off all other mental content.' Obviously the author is not acquainted with the Science of the Mantra, the Potent Word, which has played such an important part in the development of the Indian spiritual and mystic tradition.

[1] *Vide* the Isha Upanishad : They (enter) as if into a greater darkness who devote themselves to the Knowledge alone (verse 9), or (verse 12). Into a blind darkness they enter who follow after the Non-Birth.

outshines all brilliance with the intensity of its darkness'. And the Tibetan Book of the Dead puts the same paradox in the words, 'the clear light of the Void'. In Dionysius we see that the obscurity, or the darkness, is the brilliance, and in the Tibetan Book we see that the Void itself is a clear light."

The author draws a clear distinction between Mysticism and Religion. Mystic experience may or may not take a religious form. But, we may add, it always partakes of a spiritual character. For the consciousness that receives the mystical experience can only do so to the extent it is freed (may be temporarily) from the hold of the physical senses and opens to what is beyond them, the supra-physical or the spiritual. The same experience may be vouchsafed to the believer as to the unbeliever, provided the being or the consciousness is ready to expand beyond its habitual limits and the hour has arrived.

The Selections start with the Upanishads[1] which are, says the author, 'among the oldest records of mysticism in the world... of unsurpassable depth of spirituality.' He draws attention to the fact that though Vedanta is considered to be a philosophy, an intellectual product, it 'is in reality rooted in mysticism'. He points out that *māyā* in the Upanishads did not originally mean 'illusion' as commonly understood but signified a Power of Brahman producing the world.

Next to the Upanishad, the editor turns to Sri Aurobindo whom he regards as 'the direct spiritual descendant of those seers' and writes :

"We must not, of course, think of Sri Aurobindo's work as a mere wooden reproduction of the ancient wisdom. This is a charge which can with some justice be brought against some contemporary Indian philosophers. But it cannot be brought against Indian mystics. For they are by nature inspired men,

[1] From the Chhandogya, Brihadaranyaka and the whole of the Svetasvatara Upanishads.

not copyists. Along with the identity of spirit as between the Upanishads and Aurobindo there has, of course, been change of form."

Observing that 'his English style is in many respects exceedingly beautiful and powerful', Mr. Stace cites the following passage from the *The Life Divine* (from which all the selections in this section are taken) as a 'beacon light of his own mystical illumination... of very great importance" :

> At the gates of the Transcendent stands that mere and perfect spirit described in the Upanishads, luminous, pure, sustaining the world..., without flaw of duality, without scar of division, unique, identical, free from all appearance of relation and of multiplicity,—the pure Self of the Adwaitins, the inactive Brahman, the transcendent Silence. And the mind when it passes those gates suddenly...receives a sense of the unreality of the world and the sole reality of the Silence which is one of the most powerful and convincing experiences of which the human mind is capable.

The other Selections are indeed most interesting. Attention is pointedly drawn in his commentary by the author to the key concepts in the several writings of the Mystics. For instance, he points out how Nirvana in the Buddhist scriptures is not something negative, a 'total annihilation' as understood in the West but a state of positive bliss; how Nirvana is 'the only mystical element in Buddhism, all other elements being rationalistic and skeptical.'

Mr. Stace is at his best in his analysis of the descriptions given by mystics in the East and the West of the supreme experience of union with God. He shows how while in some of the traditions of Indian Vedanta and men like Plotinus[1] it is openly declared that

[1] "He belongs to Him and is one with Him, like two concentric circles; they are one when they coincide, and two only when they are separated. It is only in this sense that the Soul

there is no distinction left between the soul and God, it was a heresy in orthodox Christian and Islamic theology to say so. According to them the gulf between God and man, the Creator and the creature, is impassable. Christian mystics like St. Theresa ignored this dogma and went on to describe the union as they experienced it. Meister Ekhart's language tended to be heretical and he had to defer to the Church by explaining away his transcriptions. Ruysbroeck employed the imagery of heat and iron to illustrate the nature of the union, each interpenetrating the other and yet maintaining separate existence.

Ekhart's account of the 'Birth of Christ in the soul' which 'is impossible without a complete withdrawal of the senses' and 'a reaching inward of ourselves to the apex of the soul' strongly reminds us of the birth of the Gods in man spoken of in the mystic hymns of the Veda. "This birth takes place in the core or essence or apex of the soul, which is pure unity without multiplicity, the central silence[1] there where no creature may enter or an idea." (Ekhart).

Equally graphic are the metaphors of Ruysbroeck. He calls the Unity undifferentiated *Darkness* in which 'is born an incomprehensible light which is the Son of God'; elsewhere he calls it Nudity or the 'dark silence in which all lovers lose themselves.' He also speaks of the 'wayless abyss' which is *onefold*. "The God-seeing man..." he writes, "can always enter, naked and unencumbered with images, into the inmost part of this spirit....

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is other (than God).... That which is divine is ineffable, and cannot be shown to those who have not had the happiness to see it. Since in the vision there were not two things, but seer and seen were one (for the seeing was no seeing but a merging), if a man could preserve the memory of what he was when he was mingled with the Divine, he would have in himself an image of Him. For he was then one with Him, and retained no difference, either in relation to himself or to others. Nothing stirred within him, neither anger nor concupiscence nor even reason or spiritual perception or his own personality....Such is the life of gods and of godlike and blessed men; a liberation from all earthly bonds, a life that takes no pleasure in earthly things, a flight of the alone to the Alone." (Plotinus)

[1] Akin to the 'vast and profound solitude, in an immense and boundless desert' of St. John to which the author refers later on.

If it (the spirit) observes itself, it finds a distinction and otherness between itself and God; but where it is burnt up (in the fire of love) it is undifferentiated and without distinction, and therefore it feels nothing but unity.

Speaking of the 'Dark night of the soul' for which the mystic St. John of the Cross is famous, the author points out that it has two different meanings : one, a state of blankness of the mind and senses in respect of sensations, images and concepts, and two, the period of despair in which the seeker feels forsaken by the Lord.

After reading the sublime contents of the book, passage after passage linked by the perspicacious commentary of the editor, the last chapter 'Retrospect and Prospect' comes as an anti-climax. What are the prospects of Mysticism in the future of the world ? asks the author and answers : willy nilly the world will continue and with it Religion and with Religion spiritual values and mysticism will manage to survive. This is the negative note on which he ends. He does not agree with those who perceive a line of purposive ascent in the evolution of the human race. He avers that there is no definite purpose or plan in the career of the universe. For, he seriously writes, 'Certainly no evidence of this is to be found in Darwinism or in any later version of the theory of biological evolution.' As if Physical Science could hold the light for a totally different dimension of existence to which this whole book bears such resounding testimony! If there be one truth which all these diverse writings collected in the volume emphasise it is that the supreme end of all life is the spiritual. All endeavour in the universe is towards a progressive evolution of the central Consciousness from the bases of sub-conscience or in-conscience to the heights of super-conscience, with the corresponding evolution of appropriate forms for the rising Consciousness. All mystical experience, all progressive thinking points to the gradual growth of the mental consciousness of man into a scale that is supermental—call it mystic, call it gnostic—and as this higher con-

sciousness proceeds to establish and extend itself on those levels of humanity which are ready for it, the age of Mysticism, the reign of the supramental Spirit will have begun.

M.P. PANDIT

(2)

Kshemendra Ki Auchitya-Drishti. *By Lajpat Rai.* Pub. Motilal Banarassidass, Patna. pp. 136, Price Rs. 4.00.

This is an authoritative edition and exposition in Hindi of Acharya Kshemendra's 'Auchitya Vichara Charcha'. The translation of the text is preceded by a critical appraisal of the Acharya's work, which is succinct and suggestive. Valuable notes and indices are added at the end.

Kshemendra occupies a unique position in the galaxy of Sanskrit rhetoricians. His is not merely one of the many schools. He makes a fresh and original approach to the whole subject of aesthetics. He views the domain of poetics from the standpoint of Auchitya, *propriety*, that which is appropriate and apposite, *sadṛśam kila yasya yat*. He concedes the importance of embellishments (*alaṁkāra*) and qualities (*guṇa*) in good poetry. But they will cease to be such if they are not governed by a sense of propriety. The body poetic may be ready, perfected by Rasa; but for it to be beautiful it should be set in proper proportions. Auchitya should pervade and flow through all the limbs of the body poetic to make it living. In other words propriety is the life-force of aesthetics.

It should be noted that Kshemendra does not involve himself in search of the soul of Poetry like other rhetoricians. He is content with identifying its life-force as propriety. He is rather interested in the creator of poetry, in the enjoyer of aesthetics, in the Kavi, in the Rasika, whose attitude determines the sense of propriety.

As propriety is a relative term, to get the correct sense the heart of the Rasika should throb with the Universal Heart of Beauty. What is in Nature, what is *natural*, becomes what is proper. Art is not artificial. The propriety in aesthetics lies in the artless naivety, in the beauty unadorned. But beauty is not static. It is the new turn, the new form at every moment. Similarly propriety is not a static conception, it is a growing sense. Here the author draws our attention to the striking similarity between *Aucitya* of Kshemendra and the *Vakrokti* of Kuntaka which is defined as something always fresh and original, a departure from the beaten track.

One may wonder whether Kshemendra's views do not support the modern trends of stark realism and surrealism in aesthetics. It has to be remembered that the Acharya, like Aristotle, advocated perspecuity with propriety. The modern tendency 'to cover the child and uncover the woman' in the name of aesthetics lacks propriety, the very soul of aesthetic enjoyment.

Sri Lajpat Rai puts forth his view-points in a racy and telling style. The chapter headings are novel and attractive. The conclusion is entitled *Yathā vaḥ su sahāsati*, the culminating quartet of the Rig Veda. The book is both enjoyable and useful.

S. SHANKARANARAYANAN

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